

DHSS Adopt-A-Family Holiday Program Seeks Donors to Provide Gifts for Delaware Children, Families and Seniors in Need

NEW CASTLE (Nov. 20, 2018) – The Department of Health and Social Services' Adopt-A-Family Holiday program is seeking sponsors to help make the holiday season a happier one for thousands of children, adults, people with disabilities and seniors in need in Delaware.

The Adopt-A-Family Holiday program anonymously matches sponsors to seniors, individuals with disabilities or families with children. In 2017, the Holiday Adopt-A-Family program, through the leadership of the Human Services Council, Inc., helped 2,467 Delawareans.

"We always appreciate those who reach out and help those in need, but it is especially meaningful at the holidays when donations have the ability to lift people's spirits, too," Governor John Carney said. "Please take a moment to consider helping your fellow Delawareans in need by making a donation through Adopt-A-Family's Holiday program. It's another way we can share a connection with those in need and make sure the holidays are happier for them."

The deadline to "adopt" families with children is Dec. 7, and all gift cards must be delivered to the Adopt-A-Family office by Dec. 14. The deadline to deliver gifts for seniors and persons with disabilities to the Adopt-A-Family office is Dec. 7.

Adopt-A-Family provides sponsors with the age and gender of

each child in the family and a brief description of the circumstances that led to their need for assistance. The sponsor then provides gift cards for the head-of-household to use to purchase holiday gifts. The recommended minimum gift is \$100 per child, with a gift card for the parent/guardian optional but thoughtful.

Those interested in adopting seniors or persons with disabilities will be matched to an individual who is living in a nursing home or living alone receiving in-home care services. A wish list of things the individual enjoys, needs, or would appreciate, as well as clothing preferences and sizes, will be provided.

"I am always gratified to see the generous spirit of Delawareans in action," said Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) Secretary Dr. Kara Odom Walker. "Not only are you helping a Delaware individual or family by donating to Adopt-A-Family this holiday season, but that act of giving back can also increase your feelings of well-being, lower your holiday stress and provide you with a greater sense of purpose."

Families who are "adopted" are contacted by Adopt-A-Family to pick up their gift cards from the Adopt-A-Family office. Eligible recipients are referred to Adopt-A-Family by social workers from social service agencies throughout the state.

"Each year we find that many of our neighbors in need are referred to Adopt-A-Family through our State Service Centers, and other organizations, because of serious medical conditions, behavioral health challenges, domestic violence, homelessness and unemployment," said Renée P. Beaman, Director of DHSS' Division of State Service Centers, which operates the program. "The stories of those in need are poignant, and I am hopeful that my fellow Delawareans will respond generously."

These circumstances are a sample of the hundreds of

individuals and families available for adoption this season:

- A single mother of three young children was recently diagnosed with colon cancer. She has started chemo treatments and is living with other disabilities. This family is in significant need of help from the community.
- A family, with one teenage daughter, lost their home in Puerto Rico and all possessions during Hurricane Maria. The family relocated to Delaware. They moved in with friends, found employment and began to rebuild their lives here. Unfortunately, those working were laid off and the family had to stay in a hotel for a week. Since then, they were referred to a program for assistance, Dad has recently found work and the daughter has been able to start school. Starting over after such devastation is humbling for any family but the combination of relocating to a new place where the language barrier affects the access to services has been even more devastating for this particular family.
- A 77-year-old male is a veteran and was awarded the Purple Heart. He has no family to support him. He loves the Philadelphia Eagles and is a big fan who watches their games consistently. He also loves hats.
- A 93-year-old female, confined to a wheelchair, enjoys being read poems and stories. Stuffed animals bring her great joy. She has no family and is widowed.

This year Adopt-A-Family Delaware has an online platform for “adopting” families. Those interested in using the online platform may scroll through a list of available families and choose which family they would like to “adopt” until Friday, Dec. 7.

- New Castle County: <https://www.roonga.com/aafnewcastle>
- Kent County: <https://www.roonga.com/aafkent>
- Sussex County: <https://www.roonga.com/aafsussex>

To “adopt” an individual or family, please contact:

- New Castle County: New Castle County Adopt-A-Family at 302-792-6510 or email AdoptafamilyNC2@delaware.gov. Hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Mail or drop off donations to this address: Adopt-A-Family, 3301 Green St., Claymont, DE 19703.
- Kent and Sussex counties: Kent and Sussex Adopt-A-Family at 302-424-7260 or email Adopt-a-family-ks@delaware.gov. Hours are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. Mail or drop off donations to this address: Adopt-A-Family, 13 SW Front St., Milford, DE 19963.

After shopping for individuals, items may be dropped off at Adopt-A-Family offices in New Castle County (3301 Green St., Claymont) or Kent and Sussex counties (13 SW Front St., Milford). Sponsors will be given a code when they are matched to include with the gift cards or items when they drop them off so the Adopt-A-Family staff knows who should receive the items.

Gift cards may be mailed to either Adopt-A-Family office. If choosing this option, please include the family code provided by Adopt-A-Family staff in the shipping address when mailing the gift cards: Adopt-A-Family – FAMILY CODE 00000. If you would prefer to drop the gift cards off in person, please contact the Adopt-A-Family office to schedule a drop-off appointment, between the hours of 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday.

The Adopt-A-Family program aids families in crisis – those struggling with illness, homelessness, domestic violence, poverty or unemployment – throughout the year. The program was started in 1973 by Marge Meyerman and is coordinated by the Division of State Service Centers in all three counties.

For more information about Adopt-A-Family, go to the website or contact your nearest state service center.